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4701 WILLARD AVENUE, CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20815 (301) 656-4068

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SUBJECT Aftereffects of Oleg Gordievsky Defection

BRYANT GUMBEL: On Closeup this morning, more on the aftereffects of Oleg Gordievski's defection. We want to know what his defection may mean to future intelligence.

One man who may know is Soviet defector Arkady Shevchenko, who left the Soviet orbit in 1978. He's in our Washington studio this morning.

Good morning, Mr. Shevchenko.

ARKADY SHEVCHENKO: Good morning, Bryant.

GUMBEL: And in London, British Conservative Member of Parliament John Wheeler, Chairman of the Home Affairs Special Committee there.

And good day to you, sir.

JOHN WHEELER: Good morning.

GUMBEL: I'd like to start with you, if I might.

Mr Shevchenko -- Mr. Shevchenko. Mr. Gordievski, we're led to believe, had been working with the West for some time. Why did he choose to come in now? What's the thinking there?

SHEVCHENKO: I think that he decided to choose now for two reasons. One, he already, if it's true that he'd been working with the British intelligence for 13 years, I'm amazed that he was able, even, to survive for such a long period of time.

And also I would say perhaps even Gorbachev, who is very strict on discipline and on other things, it might also have something to do with the timing of his defection.

GUMBEL: Mr. Shevchenko, did you know Mr. Gordievski?

SHEVCHENKO: No. I don't know him personally.

GUMBEL: Let's go to London for a moment.

Mr. Wheeler, over there, is there any concern about the possibility of what Mr. Gordievski may be able to tell you about the internal workings of British intelligence or any security leaks there?

WHEELER: Well, I'm sure his contribution over the years to British intelligence has been very great indeed. And now, of course, he will be debriefed, and has been debriefed, so the work that is done and the contribution that he's making today will be of immense value. This is by far one of the most significant events in intelligence-gathering operations for many years.

GUMBEL: This isn't the first time, as a result of some exposures, that you in Great Britain have had wholesale expulsion of Soviets from your land. Is there any thought being given this morning of cutting back on the limit of Soviet personnel in Great Britain?

WHEELER: No. But the British Foreign Secretary has made it very clear in recent times that all diplomats in London are required to comply with the rules of diplomacy and not abuse their position.

But having said that, of course, the Soviet Union's officials and representatives overseas are always involved in espionage activities. And we take that for granted.

GUMBEL: Mr. Shevchenko, is there any reason for us to think that Mr. Gordievski might have any information on Soviet spying efforts beyond his area of responsibility?

SHEVCHENKO: Certainly. Because if he was in Moscow, he occupies, allegedly, a very important position in the headquarters of the KGB, following the illegal in the West, which is very difficult to defect for the counterintelligence of the West.

And besides, he used to work before in Scandinavia. So he's got quite a range, you know, of knowledge about many things, I am sure.

Besides, even he has a political knowledge, not only espionage activities, but other activities of the Soviet Union.

GUMBEL: I ask this one of both of you. The Soviets, one would assume this morning, would like to somehow respond to this embarrassment, or perhaps make up for it. What might they do?

Mr. Wheeler?

WHEELER: Well, it's traditional, of course, after one of these events for the Soviets to expel a corresponding number of British diplomats from Moscow. But the relationship between the top statesmen and the British Prime Minister are very good indeed. Perhaps they'll think twice about it. Because, after all, there are big deals that could be achieved over defense and armaments control, as well as trade, which may outweigh their desire to expel people.

GUMBEL: That sounds like you're saying beyond the obligatory gesture, they really won't do anything.

WHEELER: They may not.

GUMBEL: Mr. Shevchenko?

SHEVCHENKO: I don't think so. Because it seems to me that Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership now would like to promote relations, particularly with the Western European countries. And it will hardly affect the relations between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. I think so.

GUMBEL: Should we expect other defections to follow? Do movements like this oftentimes prompt further moves?

SHEVCHENKO: No, not necessarily. But it is not excluded that some other people also could defect.

GUMBEL: Mr. Wheeler?

WHEELER: Well, who can say? This was an exercise that's been going on for many years, has been eminently successful. Who can say whether there are other people in the Soviet hierarchy who might be coming over to the West in the future? Personally, I think it likely, but I cannot predict it.

GUMBEL: Mr. Shevchenko, in the future, need Mr. Gordievski fear for his life?

SHEVCHENKO: Oh, yes. Certainly. Unlike the political defectors -- I was never in the KGB, let's say. But in the KGB there are Mafia oaths, like Mafia oaths. When they join the KGB they know and they know that it's a death penalty. And as I say, KGB has a long hand and long memory. And particularly as far as

a defector from their own ranks, he will have quite a great risk for his life. Yes.

GUMBEL: Ultimately, what happens to a man like Gordievski? Can he ever hope to go on and live anything that resembles a normal life, Mr. Shevchenko?

SHEVCHENKO: I have some doubts about it. I doubt that he will be able to have a public life like, say, like I am able to do. Most likely he has to change his name, change his face, and not to appear in public, and to live in some secure houses. It's not a very good, I mean, thing to do.

But anyway, he might have a life if he will live in hiding.

GUMBEL: ...Gentlemen, thank you.